

REMARKS

*Status of the claims*

Claims 1-5 and 7 were previously cancelled. Claim 6 is currently amended.

Claim 6 is pending and under consideration with entry of the amendments. Support of the amendments can be found throughout the specification as filed, for example claim 3 as filed, page 2, lines 24-27, page 4 and line 34 to page 5 line 7.

*Claim rejections under USC § 103(a)*

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) over US 5,720,406 (Fassbind et al) in view of US 6,776,964 ('964) and US 4,226,333 (Percaprio).

Referring to figures 2, 4 and 5, pending claim 6 now comprises the additional feature that the flexible connecting member (6) comprises a cross part (8) between two closure elements (5), said cross part (8) extending transversely to the connecting line between the closure elements (5).

This additional feature of the flexible connecting member between the closure elements allow changes in the distance between the closure elements so that they can fit exactly the corresponding matrix of array of vessels they are to close.

Fassbind et al fails to teach a matrix array of vessels and closure elements.

Further, still referring to figures 2, 4 and 5 of the instant patent application, Fassbind et al fails to teach that the flexible connecting members (6) between the closure elements (5) comprise a cross part (8) between two closure elements (5), said cross part extending transversely to the connecting line between the closure elements (5). As explained above, this additional feature of the flexible connecting members between the closure elements allows changes in the distance between the closure elements so that they can fit exactly the corresponding matrix of array of vessels they are to close.

US'964 discloses a mat of sealing elements (i.e. closure elements), but fails to disclose flexible connecting members between said closure elements comprising a cross part between two closure elements, said cross part extending transversely to the connecting line between the closure elements as instantly claimed.

Further, US'964 discloses that the carrier sheet of the mat comprising the sealing elements is advantageously made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) or polypropene (PP) (column 4, lines 31-33) which are known to be relatively rigid materials that would not

allow a change in the distance between two sealing (closure) elements. Such mat of sealing elements would simply not address the technical problem that the invention solves.

Percaprio neither discloses nor teaches the abovementioned flexible connecting members (3) and their functions.

Applicants hence take the view that subject matter of pending claim 6 is not obvious over Fassbind et al in view of US'964 and Percaprio.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the USC 35 § 103(a) rejections of claim 6.

#### CONCLUSION

The pending claim 6 is believed to be in condition for allowance and issuance of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

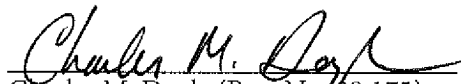
Applicants further respectfully request a 1-month extension of time to the Office Action mailed January 8, 2007. The response date was April 8, 2008; with the granting of this request, the response time is re-set to May 8, 2008. The commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the amount of \$120, the fee due under 37 CFR § 1.17(a)(1), to Deposit account No. 50-0812.

No other fee is believed to be due at this time, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee deficiency, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0812.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, he is asked to telephone the undersigned directly at 925-730-8554.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 30, 2008

  
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